

CBS Steps Up P'time News Spex

NEW YORK — CBS News is hoping to draw upon division staff to produce a series of "one-shot" news specials to help plug programming holes in the network's prime-time schedule in face of the ongoing writers' strike.

First of the planned specials are two one-hour "60 Minutes" retrospectives that will feature "best of" type "60 Minutes" stories. Format and dates have yet to be set, but "60 Minutes" producers are culling through some 1700 stories the news mag has broadcast over the past 20 years.

Other Projects

Other projects under consideration include one marking the 25th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's assassination and using the "CBS This Morning" team to produce and host a primetime special.

"Everybody's tossing in their ideas what the news division can do," said David Corvo, exec producer of "CBS This Morning." He declined to elaborate exactly what he has proposed for a primetime "CBS This Morning" specialcast.

A CBS news spokesman declined comment.

The "one-shot" news special strategy is designed to turn out product without committing staff and resources to an ongoing series, insiders said. CBS News brass is reportedly fearful that committing staff to producing an additional on-going news series — it already has three on the air — will hamper flexibility and responsiveness in handling timely subjects.

"It's easier to do specials with existing staff," groused one insider who wasn't happy with what it expected to be a heavier workload without the help of additional staff.

Some CBS News staffers are still waiting word from CBS News honcho Howard Stringer and exec at Black Rock about a decision regarding additional episodes for "Try To Remember," a nostalgia mag produced by former "Sunday Morning" exec producer Shad Northshield. The pilot aired June 23 and garnered a 7.8 rating and 16 share, not overwhelming but still respectable for a nonentertainment program.